

E-LABorations

Montana DPHHS Environmental Laboratory Updates

March 2010

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If you have events or stories to include in future issues please submit them by email to: Joel Felix
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Emergency Response Planning

The Montana Rural Water Systems Conference in Great Falls was a great success. It was an excellent opportunity to visit with many partners and the folks from laboratories from across Montana. An informational talk about Preparedness was given by [Jill Cohenour](#) (pictured here), DPHHS Chemist, and [Joel Felix](#), DPHHS Chemical Terrorism Laboratory Coordinator.



The presentation focused on Emergency Response Plans and on preparing water systems for emergencies, incidents, or threats. Building relationships **before** something happens should be the priority. This includes planning, talking, and training with your partners so everyone understands their roles and what others will be able to do in case of an emergency. For the last several years, the DPHHS Environmental Laboratory has been preparing with partners, including the state Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to assist outlying labs in the event of an emergency.

So now we ask ourselves:

- Are we in the laboratory prepared in the event of an emergency?
- Do we have all contingencies addressed in our plan?
- Have we developed the relationships we will need to get the assistance we need during an emergency, incident, or threat situation?
- When is a good time to make sure?

These are good questions for all laboratories to consider. Although all laboratories are committed to providing a safe environment for their employees and surrounding community, all laboratories may not have developed an emergency response plan that includes working with their local fire, police and sheriff departments. Besides the fire plan, emergency response plans need to include accidental spills, exposures, or other medical emergencies. Local first responders need to know who will be their primary and back-up points of contact in an emergency and what plans the laboratory has in place. The local first responders will provide advice on their capabilities to respond to a hazardous situation that may occur in the laboratory.

Once the plan is developed, training and practice are important. Simple drills can point out additional areas that need to be addressed in the plan. Individuals need to be aware of who they should report to once they have evacuated the building. Primary and back-up points of contact need to practice their roles so that they can account for everyone who was in the building. Consider including the local first responders in these drills when possible, then working together to identify the strengths and weaknesses in the response plan. Improving the plan, conducting an exercise that incorporates the improvements, and again evaluating the response are part of an on-going process that provides a coordinated and well-trained response. The process will also build the relationships which will go a long way toward improving the response to any type of incident in the laboratory.

If you would like information on developing a laboratory emergency response plan please contact a member of the **Laboratory Preparedness Team**.

Mary Simmons ♦ Joel Felix ♦ Kathy Martinka

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Useful Link from DEQ

PWS TCR Rule Manager [Laura Andersen](#) would like to remind everyone of the link on their website containing information on the following:

- **Ground Water Rule**
- **Total Coliform Rule sample Overlap Guidance**

<http://deq.mt.gov/wqinfo/pws/totalcoliformrule.mcp>

Events Calendar

Informational Webinar for Certified Drinking Water Laboratories

Presented by the DEQ Public Water Supply Program

Wednesday, April 7, 2010, 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Topic items include:

- Lab Application Sampling Results (LASR) Grant Update
 - Ground Water Rule – Labeling Source Compliance Samples
 - Lab to State (LTS) Client/WEB–Status
 - LTS Template Q & A
 - DPHHS Update
 - Health Advisory Network - Update
- »»» GoToMeeting <https://www2.gotomeeting.com/join/690312098>
- »»» Meeting ID 690-312-098
- »»» Conference Call in # 1-866-704-7500
- »»» PassCode# 764451 (please mute your phone)

Contact Andrea Vickory 444-3358 or avickory@mt.gov for more detail

ERLN Application Deadline

Date: **March 30, 2010 is the application deadline.**

The Environmental Response Laboratory Network (ERLN) integrates capabilities of existing public sector laboratories with accredited private sector labs to support environmental responses.

Benefits of ERLN Membership

- Training and Exercise Opportunities
- Recognition as a Homeland Security Asset
- Improved Communications with Member Laboratories
- Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks (ICLN) Support

To learn more about membership and possible reimbursement opportunities go to the following link:
<http://www.epa.gov/erln/join.html>

When the well is dry, we know the worth of water.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, (1706-1790), Poor Richard's Almanac, 1746